

2 Timothy 1:1-2

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/2tim/2tim-1/2-timothy-11-2/>

Paul writes to Timothy, his son in the faith, with many exhortations and warnings. He thanks God for Timothy and expresses how much he misses him. Timothy served with Paul on many missionary journeys and the two had the emotional relationship of a father and son.

Paul's letter begins with a salutation, by *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus*. It is interesting that *Paul* opens a letter to Timothy, his closest follower and protégé, with list of formal credentials. *Paul* reminds Timothy that even though he is in prison, he is still *an apostle of Jesus Christ*. He may be facing a death sentence at the hands of the Roman Emperor Nero, but he is still *an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God*. And even though he will soon die, Paul's apostleship is *according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus*.

This salutation signals to Timothy that this letter is a letter of authority. Paul has his "mentor" hat on. Soon Timothy will take the mantle of ministry, after Paul's death. But for now, Paul still speaks authoritatively, as *an apostle of Christ Jesus*.

The letter is addressed *To Timothy, my beloved son*. Even though Paul is addressing *Timothy* as an apostolic authority, *Timothy* is still his *beloved son*. There is no mention of Paul having a wife or children in a physical sense. But he considers *Timothy* as his *beloved son*. Paul first met *Timothy* on his second missionary journey. He and Silas added Timothy to their ministry team while in the Roman province of Asia (modern Turkey), and took him with them when they received a call to go to Macedonia (northern Greece, Acts 16).

Timothy is included as a co-author of the following letters of Paul:

- 2 Corinthians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- 1 Thessalonians
- 2 Thessalonians

This would indicate that Timothy was well known to these churches, and a co-laborer and fellow authority along with Paul in his ministry. Timothy apparently also ministered to the Roman church. In his letter to the Romans, Paul included a greeting from Timothy to the church at Rome, calling him "my fellow worker" (Romans 16:21). Timothy also ministered in Ephesus; we learn in Paul's first letter to Timothy that Timothy is teaching doctrine to the church in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3). This shows Timothy had a comprehensive participation in Paul's ministry.

Timothy appears to be the one to whom Paul considers his successor in the ministry. This letter could be considered an authoritative commission to Timothy, and an admonition to continue in the faith even as Paul has.

Paul asks upon Timothy *Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

The word translated *grace* is “charis” and means “favor.” The context determines who is granting favor, and for what reason. This can be seen in Luke, which says:

“And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”
(Luke 2:52)

The word translated “favor” in this verse from Luke is also “charis” so it could be translated “grace.” In this case, in Luke, humans in Jesus’ community were attributing favor to Jesus as a boy because he was growing in stature and wisdom. The “grace” or “favor” was being attributed by people based on their value judgement of Jesus’s life and character.

Another instance of the Bible’s use of “charis” is in Luke 1, when the angel addresses the Virgin Mary:

“And coming in, [the angel] said to her, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.”
(Luke 1:28)

“Favored one” in Luke 1 is a translation of “charitoo,” the root of which is “charis.”

Here in this salutation in 2 Timothy, by wishing *grace* from *God the Father and Jesus Christ our Lord*, Paul is wishing the full favor of God upon Timothy, his partner in the gospel. Paul will expound upon what Timothy needs to do to give God the greatest opportunity to grant favor to Timothy.

In addition to wishing Timothy *grace*, Paul also wishes him *mercy*. The word translated “mercy” is the same used by Jesus in describing the mercy granted by the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:37. It is also the same as in this verse from Luke, spoken by the Virgin Mary:

“AND HIS MERCY IS UPON GENERATION AFTER GENERATION
TOWARD THOSE WHO FEAR HIM.”
(Luke 1:50)

The idea of “mercy” from God is to grant favor upon someone to whom it is not due. Like the Good Samaritan, who did not owe aid to the man who was robbed, he just granted it to him. God never owes anything to anyone—He is God. But He grants mercy upon those whom He favors. God tells us what He approves, but we can never demand.

Later in 2 Timothy, Paul will wish that God will grant mercy to Onesiphorus by giving him a good judgement in the age to come, with great rewards, because of his service with and to Paul.

In saying this, Paul recognizes that all rewards given by God are because of His mercy, not because of obligation. Paul desires God's favor and *mercy* be upon Timothy. He is wishing this because he could wish nothing greater.

Paul also wishes *peace* upon Timothy in addition to wishing *grace and mercy*. It is probable that the very Jewish Paul has in mind here the Jewish idea of Shalom, which is translated from Hebrew to English as "peace." "Shalom" is used as a Hebrew greeting to this day. It has a deep and holistic meaning, being derived from a root word that indicates wholeness or completeness. The significance of "Shalom" is not limited to the mere absence of conflict. It is quite broad, and can apply to prosperous circumstances as well as spiritual wellbeing.

Therefore, in wishing Timothy *grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Jesus Christ our Lord*, Paul is wishing Timothy the best possible things, the fullest favor and mercy of God, and Shalom, which includes the peace of God, that surpasses all understanding, as well as the deepest fulfillment. He wants Timothy's life to be truly full and complete in the broadest possible terms. This is important to keep in mind, because the path Paul will lay out for Timothy (and us) to follow will be very difficult and full of discomfort.

Biblical Text

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus,

² To Timothy, my beloved son: Grace, mercy *and* peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.